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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
L-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 SAA-01 SSM-03
MCT-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /077 W
----------092657 121301Z /43
R 111354Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7980
INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

S E C R E T LONDON 10886

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, UK, LY
SUBJECT: CONTINUING BRITISH PROBLEMS WITH LIBYA

REF: LONDON 8519

1. ANGLO-LIBYAN RELATIONS CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE THEIR UPS AND DOWNS. TOMKYS, HEAD OF FCO NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA DEPT, IS PLANNING TO ARRIVE IN TRIPOLI ON JULY 13 TO HEAR THE LIBYANS OUT AGAIN ON THE ISSUE OF THE LIBYAN CLAIMS. ACCORDING TO FCO OFFICERS, HE PLANS ONLY TO LISTEN. THE LIBYANS CONTINUE TO REITERATE TO THE BRITISH THAT IF ONLY THE ISSUE OF THE CLAIMS CAN BE SETTLED, THE LIBYANS WILL GREATLY EXPAND THEIR PURCHASES OF BRITISH EXPORTS AND SERVICES. LIBYANS MADE THIS POINT TO CONSERVATIVE "SHADOW FOREIGN SECRETARY" DAVIES WHEN HE VISITED LIBYA LAST MONTH.

2. MEANWHILE, IN LONDON TWO SMALL-TIME BRITISH BUSINESSMEN WERE ARRESTED ON JUNE 23 FOR ATTEMPTING TO KIDNAP MAHMOUD SULEIMAN MAGHRABI, FORMER LIBYAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED KINGDOM WHO WENT INTO
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OPPOSITION TO QADHAFI AND WAS GIVEN ASYLUM HERE. THE TWO MEN, ACCORDING TO A BRIEF PRESS ITEM, WERE WILLIAM BRYCE, 53, AND TREVOR BRYCE, 39, BOTH OF PRIMROSE GARDENS. THEY APPEARED IN MARYLEBONE COURT IN LONDON ON JUNE 27 CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO KIDNAP MAGHRABI, AND WILLIAM BRYCE WAS ALSO CHARGED WITH POSSESSING A WEAPON, A CLINICAL LANCE ADAPTED

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TO DISCHARGE NOXIOUS GAS. TOMKYS AND HIS DEPUTY IN-
FORMED EMBOFF CONFIDENTIALLY THAT THE BRYCES UNDER-
TOOK THEIR ACTIVITY AT THE BEHEST OF OR IN ORDER TO
GAIN THE FAVOR OF MEMBERS OF THE "PURCHASING STAFF" OF
THE LIBYAN EMBASSY. AFTER THE BRITISH SECURITY SER-
VICES TRACED THE LINK BACK TO THE LIBYAN EMBASSY,
ACCORDING TO THE FCO, THEY QUESTIONED A LIBYAN OFFICER
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESENT LIBYAN AMBASSADOR.
HOWEVER, AT LEAST UP TO NOW HMG HAS NOT EXPELLED ANY
MEMBER OF THE EMBASSY. SO FAR THE CASE HAS ATTRACTED
LITTLE PRESS ATTENTION.

3. COMMENT: THE ATTEMPTED KIDNAPPING DOES NOT APPEAR
TO STRIKE THE FCO AS SERIOUSLY AS THE ASSASSINATION
OF AL-NAYIF BY IRAQIS HERE LAST WEEKEND. THE FCO
EVIDENTLY REGARDS THE CLOWNISH ANTICS OF LIBYAN IN-
TELLIGENCE AGENTS HERE AS MUCH LESS DANGEROUS THAN
THOSE OF THE IRAQIS. THE HOME OFFICE AND THE BRITISH
SECURITY SERVICES DO NOT NECESSARILY REGARD THE LIBYAN
INTELLIGENCE PRESENCE HERE AS COOLLY AS DOES THE FCO.
IN THE CASE OF BOTH THESE ARAB COUNTRIES, THE FCO IS
NO DOUBT TORN BETWEEN THE DANGERS POSED BY THE TWO
REGIMES AND THE VERY LARGE MARKET FOR BRITISH GOODS
WHICH THE ECONOMIES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES POTENTIALLY
OFFER.

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